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SUBJECT: MEPI SMALL GRANTS MANAMA REPORT

REFERENCE: STATE 58025

¶1. Following is Embassy Manama's report on FY 03 MEPI Small Grants:

¶1A. The Mother Child Early Education Program, Bahrain Red Crescent Society, \$24,989:

Results and impact of the program: Fifty low income mothers received training on how to teach basic skills to their pre-school children in the homes. Without the MEPI small grant, these children would enter the first grade in 2006 at a significant disadvantage, perhaps never catching up to their peers. The project also taught the mothers how to network with community groups such as social workers, public health professionals, and advocacy groups.

Lessons learned: When mothers are empowered with the skills and education to foster successful growth and development with children at home and school, they can, through their own self-initiative, begin to remove the stumbling blocks that compel educational disadvantage.

Potential for the program's activities to be replicated in the region: There are no government-funded preschools in Bahrain and low income Bahraini families are not able to afford private preschools. If other countries in the region do provide for preschool education in the public sector, it might not be a priority to replicate this project in those countries. In countries that do not provide for preschool education, this project could be replicated.

Capacity of the recipient organization to implement a larger grant: The Bahraini Red Crescent Society implemented this project. The organization is well run with a highly educated Director and a dedicated staff. The organization could implement a larger project.

Date the grant officially closed out: Project will be completed on April 30, 2005, and all funds will be expended.

¶1B. Trafficking in Persons Victim Abuse Assistance, \$24,400:

Results and impact of the program: Eight GOB officials from the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Interior received training in assisting victims of trafficking in persons (TIP). The implementer intended to provide similar training to volunteers of the Migrant Workers Group (MWG), an organization dedicated to helping TIP victims. However, the parent organization of the MWG was dissolved by the GOB a few months before the implementer arrived in Bahrain and MWG members were unable to benefit from the small grant. EmbOffs and the implementer decided to set up a training program for assisting victims of domestic violence instead. More than twenty members of various women's groups participated in the training. Both the GOB officials and the civil society participants were overwhelmingly positive about the training and said they would try to implement what they learned in their work.

Lessons learned: Interest in combating both trafficking in persons and domestic violence is on the rise in Bahrain. Many GOB officials and others, however, do not have experience in dealing with these issues. Any support the USG can provide in this regard is welcome and appreciated here.

Potential for the program's activities to be replicated in the region: Trafficking and domestic violence are problems throughout the region and victim assistance training would be beneficial.

Capacity of the recipient organization to implement a larger grant: The Foundation for Global Leadership was very well received in Bahrain and post views it as a strong potential partner in future projects. Given that it is a very small organization, however, it might not be capable of implementing a significantly larger grant.

Date the grant officially closed out: Project was completed on December 22, 2004 and all funds were expended.

¶1C. Family Empowerment and Education Reform for Adolescents

with Mental and Physical Handicaps, Al Rahma Center, \$25,000:

Results and impact of the program: An American expert in special education evaluated Al Rahma's methodology and teaching practices in Bahrain's first-ever Center for teenagers and young adults with special needs. Forty students are currently enrolled in the Center's activities and there are plans to increase that number as the Center's capacity expands. As a result of the implementer's visit, the Center has a clearer sense of programmatic objectives and a concrete plan to link Bahraini professionals with their American counterparts. Bahraini professionals working in this field are in need of written materials on the diagnostic process, family involvement, and the awareness for psychiatric needs in the populations.

Lessons learned: Those involved in the advancement of education for mentally and physically challenged citizens are eager to work with the U.S. on issues of civic responsibility and voluntarism. The workshops conducted by the MEPI implementer on how to network and advocate with the GOB and other support structures for the rights and concerns of the developmentally disabled were well attended by Al Rahma staff, the Board of Directors, and the families of the students.

Potential for the program's activities to be replicated in the region: Working with children and youth with special needs is at the very early stages in the Gulf. The activities undertaken at Al Rahma Center could be replicated in neighboring countries.

Capacity of the recipient organization to implement a larger grant: The Al Rahma Center could implement a larger grant, the Center's Board is very active and the Director is responsive.

Date the grant officially closed out: Project will be completed on June 30, 2005, and all funds will be expended.

1D. Promoting Freedom of Speech and an Open Media in the Gulf, a student-run campus radio station, University of Bahrain, \$24,939: The Mass Communications Department at the University of Bahrain submitted a written request on April 4, 2005, asking for a no cost extension due to unforeseen delays in the construction and hard-wiring of the University's Media Center, which will house the radio station.

Amount of funds expended to date: No funds have been expended since the grant is for the purchase of equipment and training for students on how to operate the equipment and produce radio programming. Other than the construction delays mentioned above, there are no further obstacles likely to prevent the completion of the project. Post's MEPI working group has approved the extension until June 30, 2006.

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